

News

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SETAC Europe LCA Steering Committee Election

The Life Cycle Assessment Steering Committee of SETAC Europe is seeking two new members to actively participate in the organisation and coordination of SETAC's LCA activities in Europe. Activities include preparation of all meetings and interactions at a European scale in LCA activities, including in relation with UNEP and other organisations. Further information on the work of the SETAC LCA SC can be obtained from the SC chair Angeline de Beaufort (beaulang@planet.nl).

Preference will be given to one member from academia and one member from consultancy. Members from Central and Eastern European countries are strongly encouraged to participate.

Self-nominations should be sent to Valerie Verstappen at the SETAC Europe office (valerie.v@setaceu.org) with copy to beaulang@planet.nl. Please include full contact details and 5–10 lines with your background and motivation that can be included in election materials. Elections will be held during the LCA Sessions at the SETAC Europe Annual meeting in Lille (France), May 22–26, 2005. Deadline for application: May 10th, 2005.

Life Cycle Inventory for Gold and Silver as a By-product

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Gold and silver are used in the jewellery as well as in the photographic industry and the production of electronic components. Important producer countries of gold are South Africa, the USA, Australia, South America, Indonesia and Papua New Guinea. For several important gold producing countries, the environmental impacts of gold and silver production have been investigated in a life cycle inventory covering the life cycle from mining through the gate of the factory. The inventory is split up in two main production stages, which are mining and smelting or refining. The infrastructure for mine and land occupation is included in the analysis. In this study, silver is a by-product of gold mining. By-products of the smelter are copper, zinc, lead, palladium concentrate and H₂SO₄. The LCI study includes data sets for gold from Canada, USA, South Africa, Australia, Papua New Guinea, Chile and Sweden, as well as

a data set for the gold transport and the supply to Europe. It also includes data sets for silver as a by-product of the gold production in Chile, Papua New Guinea and Sweden. A silver mix-data set taking into account the three origin countries with each a third is also provided. The investigation is based on environmental data provided by environmental reports of companies operating mines in the different countries, and further literature.

The life cycle inventories are completely compatible with the ecoinvent data base (www.ecoinvent.ch). They are available in the EcoSpold Format. The inventory shows that gold production is very variable between the different countries with regard to energy use and emissions. The largest part of energy use occurs in the mining step.

The inventory report and the data can be purchased from ESU-services.
Further information is available from Mireille Faist Emmenegger, ESU-services, see contact details above.

EC-JRC News: Breakthrough in Environmental Monitoring from Space

Scientists working at the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission have developed a new way to interpret data from satellites observing the earth. The satellites monitor the nature, state and evolution of the earth's vegetation. This enhanced monitoring capacity will make it more possible to determine the impact of major climatic events, such as the severe drought and heatwave in Western Europe in 2003. The new method involves the use of practical algorithms to interpret remote sensing data collected by sensors in satellites.

The practical usefulness of this innovative approach was amply demonstrated during the drought of Spring/Summer 2003. This was the hottest summer in 500 years; 35,000 casualties were attributed to the heatwave and economic damages estimated at over 10 billion Euros. Analysis of the data leading up to, during and

after the drought period carried out on the basis of this new method shows that indications were detectable as early as March 2003 in some agricultural regions (Northern France, Benelux and Germany for example). This methodology could therefore be used in the future to monitor effects of such climatic events.

A prototype methodology was developed and tested, including with international partners. This methodology was then transferred to the European Space Agency for implementation. It will be used to propose new indicators of environmental stress for monitoring by the European Environment Agency.

NADINE GOBRON, a young scientist associated with the development of these new methods, has received the Joint Research Centre award for 'Best Young Scientist 2004' for her outstanding scientific contribution.

For more information: http://ies.jrc.cec.eu.int/Vegetation_productivity.120.0.html

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